



# WHAT TO DO IF YOU FIND A CHEETAH

For more information, refer to the CITES Cheetah Trade Resource Kit; [www.cites.org](http://www.cites.org)

## DID YOU FIND A CHEETAH OR CHEETAH SKIN? Key distinguishing features



ADULT CHEETAH



CHEETAH CUB

**ADULT & OLDER CUB**

Relatively small, rounded head  
Amber / orange colour eyes  
Black 'teardrop' mark running from eye to side of mouth  
Black nose tip  
White chin with no/very few spots  
Fur rather coarse and short  
Main coat colour tawny yellow

Rounded ears, black at base  
Black spots across entire body including legs and tail  
Long tail  
Often several black and white bands at end of tail  
Whitish belly  
Claws always visible (cannot be fully retracted into pads)

Head-Body Length: 110 – 140 cm • Tail Length: 60 – 80 cm  
Height at Shoulder: 60 – 80 cm

**YOUNG CHEETAH CUB**

Rounded ears  
Long silvery-white mane of hair across back - which reduces to a more fluffy appearance around 4-5 months of age  
Dark fur partially obscuring spot pattern - disappears at around 3 months old  
Black nose tip  
Black 'teardrop' mark running from eye to side of mouth  
Some spots visible on legs  
Tail tip usually white

Approximate Height at Shoulder: 2-8 weeks old up to 20cm  
• 6 months 40-50cm • 12 months 50-70cm



REAL CHEETAH FUR

Backed by skin, each hair tapers to a thin end and shrivels and smells like human hair if burnt.



FAKE CHEETAH FUR

Often has webbed backing material, hairs are uniform width, melts and smells like plastic if burnt.

## IS THERE A LEGAL PERMIT? How to check the paperwork

- Any cheetah or cheetah specimen transported between countries **must have a valid CITES import, export or re-export permit or certificate** to be legal.
- National CITES Authorities can help verify CITES permits or certificates.** Contacts: <https://cites.org/eng/parties/country-profiles/national-authorities>



LEFT: Most live cheetah in the illegal trade are young cubs.  
CENTRE: A high proportion of trafficked cheetah die in transit.  
RIGHT: Illegally traded cheetah parts may include skins, teeth and claws.

## WHAT ARE THE EMERGENCY RESPONSE PRIORITIES? Securing and photographing

- The time during and immediately after a seizure is crucial for animal(s) survival. Cheetahs are often transported in badly made cages, baskets or boxes without food or water and a very high number die in transit. The following steps should be followed;

Photograph the scene, plus both sides of each animal's body and head.

If seized container(s) are inadequate, place cheetah(s) in suitable, secure cage(s).

If available, wear surgical gloves when touching cage(s) and wash your hands after.

Provide clean drinking water.

Minimise stress - move cage to a quiet, shaded area away from people.

Prevent heat and cold. Ideal temperature is 20°C to 25°C.

## NEXT STEPS Reporting, advice and health check

Identify and label each piece of evidence. Prepare chain of custody forms.

Report to national authorities. See factsheets and kit for info.

Seek veterinary and expert advice as soon as possible.

Is the cheetah responsive / dehydrated / sick / injured? Refer to health checklist.

Do not mix cheetahs from different groups / incidents.

Keep sick animals separate with space between their cages.

- If there is a need for **support in handling live cheetahs**, contact the National and / or Regional Cheetah Coordinator: see **Factsheet 7** of the CITES Cheetah Trade Resource Kit (CTRK) for information.
- After completing the above steps, **fill in an Ecomessage form** - downloadable from: <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/document/E-Res-11-03-R18.pdf> to send to the INTERPOL National Central Bureau.
- Report any seizures** to the National CITES Management Authority and relevant authority responsible for wildlife crime investigations using seizure forms from the CTRK. National CITES Authorities contacts can be found here: <https://www.cites.org/eng/cms/index.php/component/cp>

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is an international agreement between governments that regulate international trade in CITES-listed animals and plants. Cheetah is listed on CITES Appendix I, so international trade in wild-caught cheetahs is banned (except for annual quotas for hunting trophies and live specimens given to Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe).